



Complaints Policy

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Last reviewed	August 2023
Next review due	August 2024
Responsible division	Programmes Division, School Partnerships Division, Human Resources
Responsible director	Executive Director, Early Career Framework and National Professional Qualifications
Applies to	All external stakeholders who engage with Ambition Institute
Exceptions	None
Audience	Shared with all staff, external contractors involved in assessment processes, all participants, and all partners supporting the delivery of our programmes.
Applicable laws	Data Protection Act 2018; UK General Data Protection Regulation
Other relevant regulations	N/A

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1. Objectives

- 1.1. The purpose of this policy is to ensure that all stakeholders and participants can log a formal or informal complaint should they have a need to, and that all complaints are dealt with in an appropriate, fair, consistent, and timely manner.

2. Background and Legal/Regulatory Framework

2.1. This Complaints Policy is accessible to all and is published on our website. All individuals connected to Ambition Institute programmes including but not limited to participants (including mentors, lead mentors, course participants/trainees), schools, and delivery partners will be made aware of this policy through various means including in participant and associated contracts and handbooks.

2.2. Ambition Institute is committed to providing the best service possible and to supporting participants to keep getting better. It is therefore important that we use complaints as an opportunity to re-examine systems and services and, through feedback to the complainant, show that we are responsive to their concerns. In addition, our complaints procedure aligns to the requirements outlined within the guidance provided by regulatory and quality assurance bodies overseeing qualifications awarded by Ambition Institute. This includes:

2.2.1. For National Professional Qualifications (NPQs): Ofsted

2.2.2. For the Early Career Teachers Programme: Ofsted

2.2.3. For Masters in Expert Teaching (MET): Plymouth Marjon University (PMU)

2.2.4. For Initial Teacher Training: Ofsted and Liverpool Hope University (LHU)

3. Responsibilities

Responsibilities	Owner
Oversight of the process and stakeholders involved, including guidance on handling serious complaints, as well as accountability for the resolution of the complaint.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> > For Programme specific complaints: the Director with oversight for that Programme. > For all other complaints: the area of operations that the complaint relates to, for example School Partnerships, Programmes, Human Resources, or the most applicable team.
Supporting the effective implementation of this policy.	Programme Teams, School Partnerships Teams, Human Resources (regarding complaints against members of staff).
Responsible for ensuring this process complies with regulations and guidelines relating to qualifications awarded by Ambition Institute, reviewed annually or as and when regulations and guidelines are revised.	Programme Teams

4. Policy

What is a Complaint?

4.1. A complaint is defined as an oral or written expression of dissatisfaction, whether justified or not, and requires a formal response.

- 4.2. Complaints typically are related to a particular event/act, omission, decision, or quality of service/product delivered.
- 4.3. A complaint may be made directly about Ambition Institute directly or in relation to one of our partners.
- 4.4. This policy is not a substitute for good practice and, in the first instance, every effort should be made by all parties to resolve complaints in a fair and just manner without invoking this policy.
- 4.5. Ambition Institute takes all complaints seriously and we will endeavour to respond to all complaints in a timely manner.

Making a Complaint

- 4.6. A complaint can be raised in person, via telephone, or electronically. We aim to resolve all complaints informally.

Level	Description
Level 0 - None	This will be used when the person getting in touch is not dissatisfied with our service, or the service of a partner. They may have lost an email address or have a query around a submission deadline.
Level 1 - Minor	This complaint level would be used when something has gone wrong, but the complainant isn't necessarily unhappy with the service provided. Cases at this level would be resolved by the staff member who initially deals with the case and would not need to be escalated to a more senior staff member. Furthermore, no formal response would be required. However, depending on the situation, the case may be transferred to a different team or require input from other teams within the organisation.
Level 2 - Moderate	For complaints at this level the complainant would be unhappy with the service that has been provided to them. They might use words like disappointed, concerned, or frustrated. The complaint can be handled within the team, with support by wider departments if required. This does not need to be escalated to directors. However, a formal written response via email is required.
Level 3- Major	A case would be categorised as a '3' if the complainant is deeply unhappy with the service provided to them. They may use language that indicates that they are angry or feel that they have been mis sold a programme. A complaint in this category would likely use similar words to level 2 but pushed further. The following would be examples of phrases used: "extremely disappointed", "incredibly angry", or "I feel like Ambition has completely let me down". Furthermore, if the complainant has indicated that they wish to make a complaint, it would always fall into this category.

	Complaints in this category would always need to be escalated to a Programme Lead/Area Director or Director, and a formal written response would be required from a member of senior management.
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	For any programmes where there is a contractual obligation to report complaints received (for example to the DFE), only complaints at level three would be included.
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Making a Complaint

- 4.7. A complaint becomes formal when it is not resolved to the satisfaction of the complainant and requires escalation.
- 4.8. Anonymous complaints will not be accepted unless at the discretion of an Ambition Institute Director, if it is felt the complaint is of sufficient seriousness to warrant this.
- 4.9. Complaints should be made within ten days of the incident occurring. Ambition Institute may request justification for any complaints raised after the original ten-day window.
- 4.10. Ambition Institute requests that as much information as possible is provided when making a complaint. Helpful information includes but is not limited to:
 - 4.10.1. Names of any relevant parties.
 - 4.10.2. Date, time and location of the incident.
 - 4.10.3. Details of any informal attempts to resolve the matter.
- 4.11. If the complainant would like to record any conversation during the complaints process, please agree this in advance with the staff member designated to investigate the complaint.

Nature of the Complaint

- 4.12. If the complaint relates to suspected or actual plagiarism, this should be dealt with according to Ambition Institute's Plagiarism Policy.
- 4.13. Complaints relating to data protection, including Data Subject Rights, should be dealt with in line with our Data Protection Policy and handled by Ambition Institute's Data Protection Officer.
- 4.14. For complaints made by an Ambition Institute staff member against another Ambition Institute staff member, this should follow Ambition Institute's Grievance Policy, or the individual should contact HR for further guidance.
- 4.15. In the instance where a participant on one of our programmes wants to make a complaint in regard to a delivery partner or third party involved in the delivery of an Ambition Institute programme, they should in the first instance seek to resolve this via the associated partner's complaints procedure. This

includes where a partner/third party is involved in the review, selection, or assessment of an individual for an Ambition Institute programme. Participants have the right to escalate their complaint to Ambition Institute only on the grounds that:

- 4.15.1. The participant feels that the partner's procedures were not followed properly.
- 4.15.2. The participant feels that the partner's decision maker(s) reached an unreasonable decision.
- 4.15.3. The participant has new material evidence that they were unable, for valid reasons, to provide earlier in the process.
- 4.15.4. There is bias or reasonable perception of bias during the procedure.

In these instances, the complaint will be addressed by Ambition Institute in accordance with this policy.

4.16. For participants on the Masters in Expert Teaching (MET) programme, any complaints in regard to the running of the programme should be made to Ambition Institute in the first instance, in accordance with this policy. Once Ambition Institute's complaints procedure has been fully exhausted, MET participants have the right to escalate their complaint to Plymouth Marjon University only on the grounds that:

- 4.16.1. The participant feels that Ambition Institute's procedures were not followed properly.
- 4.16.2. The participant feels that Ambition Institute's decision maker(s) reached an unreasonable decision.
- 4.16.3. The participant has new material evidence that they were unable, for valid reasons, to provide earlier in the process.
- 4.16.4. There is bias or reasonable perception of bias during the procedure.

In these instances, the complaint will be addressed by PMU in accordance with their Complaints Procedure.

4.17. For participants on the Initial Teacher Training Programme, any complaints in regard to the running of the programme should be made to Ambition Institute in the first instance, in accordance with this policy. Ambition Institute may refer complainants to follow the complaints procedure of Liverpool Hope University where applicable.

4.18. For complaints related to the outcome of an assessment or moderation, also known as appeals, this should follow the Assessment & Appeals Policy relevant to that programme.

4.19. If the complainant would like to record any conversation during of the complaints process, for instance because they have a disability which may affect their ability to process or record information, please agree this in advance with the staff member designated to investigate the complaint. If you would like to raise a complaint, please contact a member of Ambition Institute staff so they can address your concerns as quickly as possible.

Handling a Complaint

- 4.20. All complaints will be handled with appropriate discretion, confidentiality, and sensitivity.
- 4.21. The complaint will be formally acknowledged within two working days of receiving it by the person who received the complaint. A relevant staff member will be assigned to investigate the complaint.
- 4.22. The allocated staff member will investigate the complaint within five working days of receipt and communicate an acceptable timeframe within which a response will be issued.
- 4.23. If a complaint is made about an Ambition Institute employee by a participant or other external stakeholder, it will be investigated under the terms of this policy. If appropriate, action may be taken following the process set out in Ambition Institute's Disciplinary Policy.
- 4.24. On completion of the investigation the manager responsible will send a formal response to the complainant within two working days of the conclusion of the investigation. The response will detail the findings from the investigation, and any resolution offered to the complainant, if applicable.

Appeals

- 4.25. Every complainant has the right to appeal against a decision made under this procedure if they are not satisfied with the outcome or the resolution offered. Details of how to appeal will be provided as part of the response to the original complaint. The appeal must be made within five working days of the complainant being informed of the decision and must be in writing.
- 4.26. The complaint will then be passed to the relevant department Director to review. In the case of complaints relating to qualifications awarded by Ambition Institute this will be the Director of the Programme who will ensure that all regulatory or quality assurance bodies overseeing the award of the qualification in question are informed immediately of the appeal. In the case of complaints relating to the Admissions process for Ambition Institute programmes, this will be the Admissions and Operations Director.
- 4.27. The Director of the department considering the appeal will review the original complaint and response and conduct another investigation which will be undertaken within ten working days of the appeal.
- 4.28. The Director of the department considering the appeal will inform all parties of their decision within 2 working days of it being reached.
- 4.29. Where a complaint cannot be resolved to the complainant's satisfaction through the internal procedure, in some cases where the complaint relates to services funded by a third party or qualifications awarded by Ambition Institute under external regulatory oversight, the complainant may have the option to submit a complaint to a funder or regulatory body. Complaints will not normally be investigated externally until our internal complaint procedure has been exhausted. At this stage the relevant department Director will redirect the complaint to the relevant external body and their complaints procedure will be followed.

Confidentiality

- 4.30. It is important that documents relating to an investigation are retained in a secure place (within Ambition Institute, this will be our CRM system, Salesforce), together with a written record of the outcome and, if the investigation results in disciplinary action against an Ambition Institute staff member, details retained on the member of staff's personnel and confidential file. Only staff directly involved with the complaint / investigation / resolution will be given access to the facts of the case.
- 4.31. All complaints will be treated fairly and in the strictest confidence in accordance with the provisions of the Data Protection Act 2018 and the UK General Data Protection Regulation. Any information relating to a third party will also be treated in confidence and in accordance with data protection legislation. The information provided will only be used for the purpose of dealing with complaints and for monitoring.
- 4.32. In the case that it is necessary that someone needs to know about the complaint, then it will be considered carefully how much detail that individual needs to know to fulfil their role in the process (e.g., if they are being interviewed regarding a specific point of the complaint). It will not always be necessary to reveal the name of the complainant or of any individuals being investigated.

5. Other Policies

There are a range of Ambition policies that should be read in conjunction with this policy depending on the nature of the complaint. These include our Ambition NPQ Malpractice and Maladministration Policy, NPQ Plagiarism Policy and Privacy Policy as well as Liverpool Hope University and Plymouth Marjon University Complaints Procedures.